
Rheumatology Couple: Dr. Marguerite Stolar and Dr. Michael Ramsden

By Marguerite Stolar, MD, FRCPC; and Michael Ramsden, MD, FRCPC

Marguerite: I met my husband at the Wellesley Hospital when I was an intern and he was working on his rheumatology fellowship. I was inspired by the dynamic group of rheumatologists and trainees at the Wellesley Hospital and decided to pursue rheumatology myself after my internal medicine training. Getting married at that point, we both had a good idea what the other individual faced in the future.

There are many practical aspects to being married to another rheumatologist, with definite benefits, which include sharing the cost of a practice, being available to cover for patients if needed, carpooling, sharing rheumatologic textbooks and journals, a second opinion regarding patient management always at hand and attending meetings together. On a personal level, the benefits include sharing the day-to-day challenges of looking after your personal health and that of your family while dealing with the stress of looking after patients with rheumatologic diseases. I think this degree of insight into your spouse's work and challenges is more positive than negative.

When we first started practice together I recall other physicians wondering how we would possibly be able to share an office with a spouse. Most days, we barely see each other until the end of the day and then we can share our day and try not to bring it home.

Mike: As Marguerite mentions, although we share an office, which has grown from the two of us to four rheumatologists since we started in British Columbia in 1990, we don't really bump into each other in the office, except when I bring her a daily cappuccino at lunch. We run a busy practice and do ask for help from each other with difficult or unusual cases, or when one of us just has difficulty remembering something (*What was the name of that drug again? Who's the best orthoped at ...?*)

Carpooling helps: we get to use the high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane since there are two of us, but Marguerite usually falls asleep after a minute in the car, so it's a quiet ride.

We don't usually discuss the office at home, except when I have to troubleshoot the hardware to connect to the electronic medical record (EMR) – guess who the tech person in the family is?

The vaunted rheum lifestyle has allowed us to be present and available for our now adult children, one in engineering at the University of British Columbia (UBC), one starting medicine at McMaster University, and one working crazy hours in the production side of the TV industry, putting up with worse hours than most residents face.

Our work can be stressful but doesn't compare with the stress and balancing joy that comes with raising a family.



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